

ICBL Statement on Universalization

*22MSP of the Mine Ban Treaty Intersessional Meeting,
Geneva, 1-5 December 2025*

Thank you, Madam President,

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines begins by warmly welcoming the Marshall Islands and Tonga to our Convention family. You could not have chosen a more crucial moment to join this community of states committed to a mine-free world.

We are also encouraged today by the updates from several States not party on their steps toward accession. We urge them to move swiftly toward joining the Convention without delay. [CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY - could be dropped out from delivery]

Unfortunately, this good news has been overshadowed by a series of devastating challenges that strike at the very heart of the global ban and at nearly three decades of remarkable humanitarian progress in eliminating the scourge of this horrible weapon.

First, antipersonnel landmines are being used today at a scale unseen in decades by actors outside the convention. Russia remains the main culprit, using antipersonnel mines extensively in Ukraine since its invasion in 2022 and causing unspeakable harm and devastation. As reported by *Landmine Monitor 2025*, Myanmar's government forces have escalated their use of antipersonnel mines over the past two years, contributing to the highest annual casualty figures recorded last year. Reports indicating use by Iran and North Korea are also deeply troubling.

In addition, non-state armed groups used antipersonnel mines last year in 13 countries—including 10 States Parties.

Let us be absolutely clear: any use of antipersonnel mines—by any actor, under any circumstances—is unacceptable. It must be condemned by all States Parties and halted immediately.

Second, the Convention has been shaken to the core by the unprecedented withdrawal announcements by five European States Parties: Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. While we fully recognize their security concerns, we simply do not agree that abandoning the Convention and returning to antipersonnel mines will address those concerns. Instead, they are putting at risk the lives of the very people they intend to protect, while undermining the body of laws that protect all civilians in conflict. We urge these states to reverse course and, in the meantime, to continue respecting the norms of the Convention, including refraining from any production or use of these weapons.

Their abstention on the annual UN General Assembly resolution at the First Committee was deeply regrettable. We call on all five to vote in favor at the final vote—just as many States not party have done.

Madam President, distinguished delegates,

I now turn to the most serious and entirely unprecedented threat this Convention has ever faced: the unilateral attempt by Ukraine to suspend its obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty.

Let us state this plainly: **Suspension of obligations under the Convention is unlawful.**

A unilateral suspension would fundamentally contradict the object and purpose of the Convention, undermining its integrity and credibility. It would contravene Article 1, which prohibits the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of antipersonnel mines “under any circumstances.” The treaty also explicitly prohibits withdrawal during armed conflict, showing states’ intent to prevent states from stepping away from their obligations during times of war. Given these facts, suspension could amount to a reservation, also prohibited.

~~[Likewise, the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties—invoked by Ukraine—does not authorize the suspension sought under the current circumstances. Several States Parties have already correctly objected to this claim, and for greatest clarity on this matter, we urge the UN to post these objections alongside the suspension communication.]~~

It is therefore essential that this Meeting of States Parties unequivocally affirms that suspension of the Convention is not permitted. The final report must contain clear, categorical language, leaving no shadow of a doubt on what states intended. It is simply insufficient to say the convention did “not provide for” or did “not foresee” suspension. Such language settles nothing and will not prevent the precedent from going forward.

Because indeed, the negotiators did foresee this idea and **explicitly ruled it out** during the treaty negotiations in 1997. A proposal was tabled to allow a temporary exception for the use of antipersonnel mines in conflicts with a non-party State or a non-state armed group for “national security” reasons—effectively a suspension—but **it was rejected** by the overwhelming majority of negotiating States. It did not enter the Convention then, and it cannot be introduced now by unilateral declaration. The prohibition must be articulated clearly and unequivocally, with explicit language noting suspension is “not permitted.”

If States Parties are vague on this matter—or in any way appear to tolerate such an action—just imagine the consequences. Other states, part of this convention or any other instrument of international humanitarian law, could announce they were leaving temporarily so they could violate the rules. What would be the point of norms protecting civilians in conflict if they only applied in times of peace? It would set a dangerous precedent—one that risks eroding respect for international humanitarian law globally and weakening the very norms designed to protect civilians in times of war.

Madam President,

This is a defining moment for the Convention. We urge States Parties to exercise the determined leadership they showed to achieve this convention years ago. This is no time for compromises or fuzzy diplomatic wording. The international community cannot allow erosion of the ban, normalization of landmine use, or the rewriting of core obligations, **EVEN** when it involves a close ally. We have come too far, and too many lives have been saved, for the progress of the nearly three decades to be walked back. We urge States Parties to stand firm, speak clearly, and protect the integrity of this landmark humanitarian treaty—now, when it matters most.

Thank you.